Incorporating Technology in the ESL Classroom

Lorraine M. Vazquez

Brooklyn College

Table of Contents

Abstract Page 3

Introduction Page 4

Statement of the Problem Page 4

Review of Related Literature Page 5-11

Statement of the Hypothesis Page 12

Method Page 12

Participants Page 12

Instruments Page 12

Experimental Design Page X

Procedure Page X

Results Page X

Discussion Page X

Conclusion Page X

References Page 12-14

Appendix (ces) Page 15-17

**Abstract-**heading only

**Introduction**

To date there is conflicting research (Carrol, 2011; Ybarra, 2003) in the use of technology to increase literacy levels for English Language Learners (ELL) and English as Second Language students (ESL). However a “master teachers always find a way to help their children learn, no matter what” (Cooter & Perkins, 2011). With this thought in mind we should not disregard the idea of including technology into their daily curriculum as part of “the New Literacies [that] include the skills, strategies and insights needed to successfully exploit the rapidly changing information and technologies that continuously emerge in our world” (as cited by Leu, 2002).

**Statement of the Problem**

The inclusion of technology in ESL/ELL classrooms when done correctly helps students achieve higher literacy and comprehension levels on their newly acquired language (Materson (n.d.) Morgan, 2008). This Action Research Project focuses on the implementation of technology into the curriculum on a daily basis to increase literacy levels for the ESL/ELL populations.

**Literature Review**

According to the National Education Association, the number of English as a Second Language /English Language Learner (ESL/ELL) students that were enrolled from Pre-K through 12th grade in the 2003-2004 school years were estimated to be 4,999,481 (McKeon, 2005). With staggering numbers along these lines, it is not shocking that “many mainstream classroom teachers are finding that they have English Language Learners in their classes” (Freedson-Gonzalez, Lucas, & Villegas, 2008, p. 129). With this in mind, teachers must find different ways of teaching literacy in today’s diverse classroom; one solution is the incorporation of technology. Technology brings in a different modality of teaching. “The students come to school with diverse language abilities, varied cultural identities, and multiple perspectives. Given this vast variability in English learners’ backgrounds, it is not surprising that they exhibit different learning strategies. While some are visually oriented, others prefer learning through hands-on activities. Many also learn by drawing, composing music, or performing” (Ajay, 2009 p. 585). When thinking of the many different ways of learning, we should not rule out learning through technology. Technology can be incorporated in the ESL/ELL classroom in many ways such as radio, videos, tablets, podcasts, computers and even the dated over-head projector. We should not rule out any kind of technological tool which will enhance our behavioral objective.

Technology is said to be vital in the economic and social life of the United States. Schools must incorporate it in order to better prepare their students to become familiarized with not only one type of technology, but as many as possible. If we do not expose our students to a variety of technological tools, how can we ensure they are being prepared for their future (Lee, 2006, p. 88).

**Theorist**

There has been a lot of research on Language Acquisition, some theorist such as Jim Cummins and Stephen Krashen have done extensive work on this subject. Jim Cummins has made a clear distinction between what he calls the cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) and basic interpersonal communicative skills (BICS) (Lessow-Hurley, 2013, p. 103). According to Cummins, it takes the ESL/ELL student approximately 2-3 years to fully develop their BICS. It develops by talking to peers in the playground or having everyday conversations, however it takes the same student approximately 7-8 years to fully develop their CALP. This becomes more difficult for the student because they are working towards developing context language, academic language over colloquial language. “As a result of Cummins’ thinking, educators have recognized that English learners need support in developing academic language, the language skills that are needed to accomplish successfully the tasks that are presented in school.” (Lessow-Hurley, 2013, p. 103-104).

According to Brozek and Duckworth (n.d.), “finding a way to infuse technology into instruction not only helps English Language Learners acquire a second language, but also enhances motivation and confidence” (p. 10). By motivating and creating an environment that builds on their confidence, the student is highly moved and willing to try different methods. This brings us to Krashen and his theory on the acquisition of language. The author addresses “The Natural Approach” (as cited in Terrel, 1981, p. 103) where he discusses conditions that can affect language learning, one of them being creating low anxiety situations. The author goes on to talk about “ the affective component of language learning as an affective filter,[is] a kind of emotional barrier to language learning that must be lowered if acquisition is to take place” (Lessow-Hurley, 2013, p. 67) . This theory has been highly adopted and is very popular amongst teachers because it leads to developing different types of teaching and stays away from the old paper-pen, vocabulary, and translation methods of teaching a second language. When thinking about Krashen’s affective filter theory, technology can play an enormous role, it can help those students with higher levels of anxiety; the student can work independently or as a collaborative. It can also have the student work at their own pace, keeping their filter low and continually keeping the student engaged. He provides the learner with a safe and comfortable learning environment (Faltis & Coulter, 2008, p. 28). “The non-judgmental aspect of technology is comforting to these students” (Masterson, n.d).

David Warlick (2012) once said “we need technology in every classroom and in every students’ and teachers’ hand, because it is the pen and paper of our time and it is the lens through which we experience much of our World” (personal communications, 2012). Students’ are growing in the 21st century, teachers bear the responsibility to not only prepare students with social and character skills; but also to prepare them to work in the global age which necessitates literacy in the tool of technology. By incorporating technology into the daily curriculum and making it part of their lives. For the ESL/ELL student technology can help them experience a variety of language opportunities, “they need to hear language, write language, speak language and read language” (Ybarra, 2003). The ESL/ELL student has to feel fully involved, they must feel like they own the language acquired in order to maintain the level of enthusiasm towards school and the new language being learned. As a result of technology in the classroom, the child is no longer bored. They feel involved and part of the world all around (Prensky, 2008).

Technology can be used in a variety of forms. For example, music can be a wonderful way to introduce or reinforce literacy skills. Paquette and Rieg (2008) state that “Regardless of the musical form and despite a teacher’s level of musical training, the value of fostering creativity and enhancing literacy instruction through music is vital in todays’ diverse early childhood classrooms” (p. 227). Music unites and can be interpreted in many different ways; this makes it an excellent source for ESL/ELL student to express their feelings and emotions, they are able to say what they are truly thinking without having to worry about having a correct answer.

Moreover, “technology can be used towards the enhancement of a variety of skills, from problem-solving to encouraging comprehension and engaging the students to develop dynamic discussions” (Clovis, 1997, p. 38).

Another great technological source can be any tangible item such as tablets, computers or even robots in some cases; it is said by some English teachers that when tangible items are used the students paid more attention to the subject at hand (Young, Wang, & Jang, 2010, p. E80). Bahrani (2011) talks about how access to computers in the classroom can help both formal and informal types of language acquisition; he says that the student can do anything from e-mailing to being part of a chat-room in an informal way and still develop their language, or they can use software that requires repetition and oral activities to develop that aspect of the new language (p. 115).

Many schools at different levels have used the internet to better communicate with their students, for example some universities have opted to use systems such as wiki spaces, emails, or websites for the conduction of the course. Rosa Roman (2003) was having a struggling ESL class, she opted for having the students receive daily emails that inspired their writing, this proved to be effective in her case. She found a site that was of interest to her population and she adapted her curriculum to it. In return the students achieved better levels of literacy and were able to write about different topics (p. 310).

In Chile, studies concluded that teaching English with the use of technology have, like in many other cases had the students be highly motivated and encouraged by their teachers; they say that they no longer think of technology as a maybe, but a must in the acquisition of language. (Diaz, Jansson, & Neira, 2011, p. 55).

Universities in Nigeria have opted to include technology into their classrooms because of the need for research that their students are presented with; by being able to surf the web, the students can access more information and better prepare their research. They concluded, after very extensive research, that they must prepare their students to use the technology as well as the teachers (Bamidele, Ogbuiyi, Omeluzor, & Madukoma, 2012, pg. 9).

By the same token, we must prepare our teachers to better help our students. Carrol, (2001) says that “teachers have been colonized by dominant models of technology, but do not use them effectively in their classrooms” (p. 27). In order for teachers to include technology in the classroom effectively, they must be technologically literate themselves. This brings one of the negative views of the incorporation of technology in the classroom; many researchers (Masterson, (n.d) Morgan, 2018) agree with the fact that teachers are not being prepared to work with the ever growing technology they are being presented and expected to use in the classroom to aid their students. Technology should be available to all teachers in order to teach objectively and achieve academic goals.

Michael Morgan (2008) states that technology is not needed in the classroom because of its high cost; he says that effort, time, and money can be invested or wasted on technology. If the teacher, again, is not well prepared, they end up buying everything they might think they need and do not know how to use it in context to the classroom environment.

A study on the Australian Cald community presents how much digital technology can unite, but they can also divide. If they would have introduced technology to their community in the early phases of their migration periods, not only would they have learned to utilize it better and effectively, but they would not face the many struggles they later did. The researcher points out how technology is the key to the workforce; however how can they be effective workers if they have never been exposed to the technology available? By including technology they could have acquired the language and skills necessary to succeed. (Migliorino, 2011, p. 109).

The internet tries to provide teachers with the tools necessary to achieve the same outcomes of having all the top of the line technology in the classroom, but with the minimal sources available; websites like classjump.com, teachingenglishgames.org and classconnection.org; provides teachers ideas on how to incorporate technology even if you happen to not be a technological guru. Shelley Vernon (2011) talks about everything from creating classroom blogs to creating mini movies by using free sites on the web.

“Digital storytelling technologies can be a fun and productive [way] to support the academic literacy levels of English-language learners in the classroom” (Rance-Roney, 2010, p. 386). In a study by Lotherington (n.d.), the students were given a traditional story by the teacher, they were then encouraged to re-write the story using their own cultural and linguistic perspectives with the help of digital technologies. The students then went on to creating movies that they illustrated and presented to each other. They also used translation software that allowed student to write the story in their native language and have it translated onto the new language. These types of projects help the student develop their narrative skill as part of their literacy (p. 243). Rance-Roney, (2010, p. 385) states that digital storytelling provides the ELL student with the cultural background, literacy skills, and language development to challenge them to achieve more, by feeling highly involved into the project at hand. By creating stories or videos, the student learns to use the language appropriately in matters of knowing “how, when, and why to say what to whom”, they learn to create scripts and make sense of the conversational aspect of the new language (Gabbitas, Merrill & South, 2008, p. 231).

With the provided literature available on the inclusion of technology in the ESL/ELL classroom as a way to enhance the literacy levels of such students, it becomes apparent that if teachers and schools are fully capable of using the technology available correctly it can help the student perform at better rates.

**Statement of hypothesis**

Incorporating digital stories in class five times a week for forty-five minutes during the afternoon over a four week period will motivate six ESL third grade students from an urban public school in Brooklyn, New York to increase their literacy levels.

**Method-**

**Participants (N) -** Six third grade ESL/ELL students from P.S. X in Brooklyn, New York.

**Instrument(s) -** Computers, digital cameras, vocabulary enhancing software, podcasts, surveys, and consent forms.

**Experimental Design-** heading only

**Procedure-** heading only

**Results-** heading only

**Discussion-** heading only

**Implications-** heading only

**References**

Ajayi, L., (2009). English as a second language learners’ exploration of multimodal texts a in a junior high school*. Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *52(*7), 585-595.

Bahrani, T., (2011). The role of technology in language leaning. *Canadian Social Science*, *7*(3), 114-118.

Bamidele, I., Ogbuiyi, S., Omeluzor, S. & Madukoma, E. (2012) Use of electronic information resources and research output. *Canadian Academy of Oriental and Occidental Culture*, *8*(3), 8-15.

Brozek, E., Duckworth, D., (n.d.) Supporting English language learners through technology. *Educator’s Voice*, (4), 10-15.

Carroll, J., (2011). From encyclopedias to search engines: technological change and its impact on literacy learning*.* *Literacy Leaning: the Middle Years*, *19*(2), 27-31.

Clovis, D., (1997). Lights, television, action!. *Educational Leadership*, 38-40.

Cooter, R., Perkins, H. (2011). Much done, much yet to do. *The Reading Journal*, *64*(8), 563- 566.

Coulter, C., Faltis, C. (2008). Foundations of teaching English learners and immigrant students in secondary schools.(28-29) Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc. In Teaching English Learners and Immigrant Students in Secondary Schools.

Diaz, C., Jansson, L., Neira, A. (2011). Percepciones de profesores y estudiantes chilenos de educacion media acerca del papel de la tecnologia en la clase de ingles como lengua extranjera. *Revista Lasallista de Investigacion*, *8*(2), 53-60.

Dooley, K., & Thangaperumal, P. (2011). Pedagogy and participation: literacy education for low-literate refugee students of African origin in a western school system. *Language & Education: An International Journal,* *25*(5), 385-397.

Freedson-Gonzalez, M., Lucas, V. & Villegas, A. (2008). Linguistically responsive teacher education*. Journal of Teacher Education*, *59*(4), 361-373.

Gabbitas, B., Merrill, P.& South, J. (2008). Designing video narratives to contextualize content for ESL learners: a design process case study. *Interactive Learning Environment*, *16*(3), 231-243.

Hussain, M., Iqbal, M., & Akhtar, M. (2010). Technology based learning environment and student achievement in English as a foreign language in Pakistan. *World Academy of Science, Engineering & Technology*, *61*, 129-133.

Lee,R. (2006). Effective learning outcomes of ESL elementary and secondary school students utilizing educational technology infused with constructive Pedagogy. *International Journal of Instructional Media*, 33, 87-93.

Lessow-Hurley, J., (2013). Language Development. The Foundations of Dual Language Instruction, (6th ed., pp. 67-70). Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Pearson Education Inc.

Lever-Duffy, J., McDonald, J., Mizell, A. (2003). Academic software. Teaching and Learning with Technology, (pp. 186-188). Boston, MA: Pearson Education Inc.

Materson, M., (n.d.) *Use of technology with ESL students*. Retrieved from:

www.gsu.edu/~mstmbs/IT8420/F99/MaryM1.html

Migliorino, P., (2011). Digital technologies can unite but also divide: clad communities in the digital age. *Aplis*, *24*(3), 107-110.

Morgan, M., (2008*). More productive use of technology in the ESL/EFL classroom*. *The Internet TESL Journal, 14*(7). Retrieved from:

http://iteslj.org/Articles/Morgan-Technology.html

Paquette, K., Rieg, S., (2008). Using music to support the literacy development of young English language learners. *Early Childhood Education Journal*, *36*, 227-232.

Prensky, M., (2008). The 21st century digital learner. *Edutopia*, Retrieved from:

www.edutopia.org

Rance-Roney,J., (2010). Jump-starting language and schema for English-language learners: teacher-composed digital jumpstarts for academic reading. *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy*, *53*(5), 386-395.

Rodríguez, C., Filler, J., & Higgins, K. (2012). Using primary language support via computer to improve reading comprehension skills of first-grade English language learners. *Computers in the Schools, 29*(3), 253-267.

Roman-Perez, R., (2003). Whatever works, electronic chicken soup for reluctant ESL writers. *The Clearing House*, *76*(6), 310-314.

Shwu-Ching, S., Wang, Y., Roger, J. (2010). Exploring perceptions of integrating tangible learning companions in learning English conversation*. British Journal of Educational Technology*, *41*(5), E78-E83.

Teaching English Games. (2011) Using technology in the ESL classroom- even if you are teaching in a hill tribe or yak tent!, Retrieved from:

www.teaching englishgames.org

Warlick, D., (2012) *Since twitter was unavailable…* 2¢ Worth: Teaching & Learning in the new information landscape…, Retrieved from:

http://davidwarlick.com/2cents/

Ybarra, R., (2003) Using technology to help ESL/EFL students develop language skills*. The Internet TESL Journal*, *4*(3), Retrieved from:

www.//iteslj.org/Articles/Ybarra-Technology.html

**Appendix (ces)-**

Appendix A- Parent Consent Forms

November 26, 2012

Dear Parent/Guardian:

My name is Lorraine Vázquez; I am currently a graduate student at Brooklyn College. This semester I am taking a research course which requires an Action Research Project; I have chosen to investigate the different ways of incorporating technology in the ESL/ELL classroom to better serve our students. I would like if your child participated as part of this project along with me. By agreeing your child will be participating on surveys, questioners and on the completion of a digital story.

This is completely confidential your child’s name will not be published or used. If you was to have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at [lvaz84@ymail.com](mailto:lvaz84@ymail.com) or 646-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\*.

Thank you in advance,

Lorraine Vázquez

(please return to teacher)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Student name

\_\_\_\_\_ yes, my child can participate.

\_\_\_\_\_no, I rather my child does not participate.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ ­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature Date

Appendix B- Spanish parental consent form

26 de noviembre de 2012.

Estimados padres/ guardianes:

Mi nombre es Lorraine Vázquez, en estos momentos soy parte de Brooklyn College, y estoy en el processo de adquirir mi Maestría escolar. Como parte de my curso de investigaciones estoy conduciendo un projecto en como incluir tecnología en la clase de Ingles como lengua secundaria. Me gustaria que su niño/a participe en este projecto.

La identidad de su niño/a sera confidencial. Si tiene alguna pregunta ó comentario por favor no dude en communicarse conmigo al 646-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\* ó [lvaz84@ymail.com](mailto:lvaz84@ymail.com).

Le agradezco en avanzado,

Lorraine Vázquez

(devuelva al maestro)

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Nombre del estudiante

\_\_\_\_\_ si, me gustaria que mi niño/a participe en este projecto.

\_\_\_\_\_no, mi niño/a no participara en este projecto.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Firma del padre fecha

Appendix C- Principal consent form.

November 26, 2012

Dear Principal:

My name is Lorraine Vázquez; I am currently a graduate student at Brooklyn College. This semester I am taking a research course which requires an Action Research Project; I have chosen to investigate the different ways of incorporating technology in the ESL/ELL classroom to better serve our students. I would like to work with class \*\*\* as part of this project along with me. I think we can both benefit from this opportunity to find better ways to work with our students and help them achieve higher literacy levels. By agreeing the students involved will be participating on surveys, questioners and on the completion of a digital story.

This is completely confidential all participating children name will not be published or used. If you was to have any questions or concerns please feel free to contact me at lvaz84@ymail.com or 646-\*\*\*-\*\*\*\*.

Thank you in advance,

Lorraine Vázquez

\_\_\_\_\_ Yes, this class can participate.

\_\_\_\_\_No, I rather this class does not participate.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_ ­­­­­­­­\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Principal Signature Date